



## Protecting the Natural Environment and Addressing the Climate Crisis

In 2019 the Town Council declared a climate crisis and this year has seen a lot of work towards actioning the Council's Environmental Action Plan.

The Council has continued to fund the work of Sustainable Swanage and was pleased to celebrate the formal designation of Peveril Point and The Downs as a Local Nature Reserve in the spring. In May a wonderful picnic in the park event was arranged at Herston Community Field (formerly St Mark's Playing Field). As well as providing lots of family entertainment residents were invited to put forward suggestions about how they would like to see the area used in the future.

The Council has a target to be carbon neutral by 2030 and, as from this October, the Town Council buys 100% green energy, thereby significantly reducing its carbon footprint. The Council is in the process of installing LED lighting in its workplaces and will shortly be awarding a contract for the installation of solar panels at Beach Gardens Pavilion and its Depot at Prospect Park.

## Encouraging Health and Wellbeing and Enhancing Community Safety

The Town Council prides itself on working together with local groups to deliver improvements for residents. The Council is supporting the Swanage Community Housing Group to develop affordable housing for local people who would otherwise not be able to afford to live in Swanage and continue to provide the vital trades and services on which we all rely. The Council is also working with the Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust to transfer the Day Centre and Children's Centre to local control in order to protect local health and wellbeing services.

### Responsibilities:

**Dorset Council:** Council tax collection and benefit administration, countryside services e.g. Durlston Country Park, economic development, education, emergency planning, environmental health, libraries and archives, on street parking, planning, public health, registration Service, refuse collection and, recycling, roads and footpaths, social services, street sweeping, trading standards. Tel: 01305 221000.

**Swanage Town Council:** Allotments, bandstand, bathing zone and RNLI lifeguards, Beach Gardens sports park and Tea on the Green, main beach and foreshore, beach huts on Shore road and Spa, boat park, bus shelters, car parks, CCTV, cemeteries, play areas, De Moulham Trust and grants, festive lights, historic monuments, market, memorial benches and public seats, public conveniences, public gardens, green open spaces and playing fields, skate park, Swanage Information Centre, Town Hall. Tel: 01929 423636.

The Council continues to work with Swanage & Herston Football Club to improve facilities at Day's Park, and likewise with Swanage Tennis and Cricket Clubs to increase participation in sport.



Alongside the Tennis and Bowls Clubs, it was fantastic to celebrate Beach Gardens achieving Green Flag status in the summer, in recognition of all the hard work that goes into keeping the grounds in a beautiful condition and providing sport and recreation facilities that are available to all.

The Town Council takes every opportunity to enhance the facilities it provides. Funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy, lighting has been installed along the path through Day's Park to provide a safer route to school and an improved route for those living on the Compass Point development who wish to access the bus stops in Ulwell Road. Thanks to a grant from central government and Dorset Council, this spring saw the opening of a new Changing Places toilet at North Beach car park, providing a vital facility for those who need a hoist and other disability access equipment when out and about.



This year has also seen the formation of a Disability Reference Group, known as Accessible Swanage, comprised of members with a range of impairments. This group will support the Town Council with improving accessibility across the town, for example by working with Dorset Council to increase the number of dropped kerbs. They have provided valuable feedback on the Council's seafront plans and will be working on the implementation of a number of the recommendations made in a Disability Access Audit that was commissioned by the Town Council.

The Town Council has also taken steps to enhance community safety. It has adopted a Community Emergency Response Plan, to ensure that there is local resilience if a disaster should happen. The Council has also lobbied Dorset Police to improve police presence in the town and has been pleased to see the reception desk re-open in the Town Hall Annexe two days a week. The Council is also working to improve monitoring of its CCTV network.

# Swanage Town Council ANNUAL REPORT 2023



## Mayors Report

**As we turn the page on 2023 it is a good time to reflect on the year gone by. It's been an extremely busy time and this report has been produced to highlight some of the wide range of projects, activities, and events that the Town Council has been involved in over the last twelve months.**



Being Mayor is a much bigger job than I had ever imagined. The public face of wearing the regalia and cutting ribbons is enjoyable and interesting. One of the greatest pleasures this year was the distribution of the Coronation spoons to all the primary school children in St Mark's, St Mary's and Swanage Primary Schools. Who knew a spoon could be so exciting! Or the mayor's "Big Necklace"! I love meeting people and sharing in their community efforts but there is another side to the work and that is being the Chairman of the Town Council. The responsibilities are many and various.

Engaging with all parts of our community is important to the Council, especially those that may not normally interact with Council business. Not only have the Deputy Mayor and I visited schools, but we have also invited the pupils to attend our meetings. Most recently we received a presentation from pupils of St Mary's Primary School about the importance of buying Fairtrade produce. The Council also ran engagement events for teenagers and young adults at the Skatepark in King George's Field and is supporting the formation of a Friends Group to fundraise for more equipment.

Our town is so lucky to have a large number of voluntary organisations and the Town Council has continued to support many of them. Grants have been made to the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Mowlem Theatre and #WillDoes. One of my proudest moments as mayor has been to give out community awards to some of those who have been nominated in recognition of their work for local residents. The next awards ceremony will take place in January.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed their views, either as part of one of the consultation exercises carried out this year, or by taking the time to e-mail the Council offices or talk to your local councillor. Without your participation we cannot address the community's priorities and therefore please continue to share your ideas with us over the months ahead. Indeed, don't forget that there will be a chance to stand for election next May for the coming five-year term. The Council recently held an information event for those interested in being a candidate and information about how to stand as a councillor will be available on its website early in the New Year.

Before I finish I have to mention the Charity Ball. I had the, perhaps foolish, idea to resurrect a Mayor's Ball which with the help of many others resulted in a wonderful night sparkling with ball gowns, diamante and smartly dressed revellers dancing the night away. And we raised the magnificent sum of over £2,100 for the Heroes Haven Charity.

**Wishing everyone a happy and prosperous 2024!**

**Councillor Tina Foster, Town Mayor.**

In March 2023, following public consultation, we published our first Corporate Plan, setting out the Council's priorities until 2025. Here is a summary of progress made so far.

### Delivering Good Governance

The Town Council recognises the importance of openness and transparency in respect of its activities. On the opposite page is a summary of the final audited figures for the Town Council's income and expenditure for the 2022/23 financial year. The Council is pleased to report that yet again its external auditor, BDO LLP of Southampton, has not found any significant matters of concern for councillors to consider. Much more detailed information, including every single payment made by the Town Council, can be found on its website [www.swanage.gov.uk/ Downloads.aspx](http://www.swanage.gov.uk/Downloads.aspx)

The Town Council has to spend large sums of money on maintaining the town's property. This year has seen some particularly challenging work to repair the Parish Slipway and other sections of coastal infrastructure.

The Council is now setting the budgets for the 2024/25 financial year, which starts on 1st April. Many local groups have attended committee meetings during the autumn at which the Council's budget plans have been discussed. These will be agreed at the Annual Estimates meeting which will be held at the Town Hall at 7 p.m. on Monday 15th January 2024. The agenda will include agreeing the Town Council's share of the Council Tax that local residents will pay next year, known as the precept. The budget report will be available on the Council's website prior to the meeting and you are most welcome to come along to see local democracy in action.

### Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Supporting the Local Economy

The Council plays an active role in supporting the local economy, encouraging visitors and shoppers to the town through promotional activity, supporting event organisers and funding the Christmas lights display.

The Town Council has commissioned a new 'Visit Swanage' website which will be going live in early 2024 to further raise awareness of our amazing town.

The Seafront Masterplan, which was adopted in the summer following extensive public consultation, will enable investment in the seafront to be effectively prioritised over coming years.

The main priority is to undertake the major ground stabilisation works that are required to Sandpit Field and land to the north. During 2023, the Town Council has spent a lot of time exploring opportunities for improving the 'green seafront' and by the time you read this, a report summarising the more than 400 responses submitted during the autumn's consultation will have been published online and considered at a Council meeting, prior to next steps being agreed.

### Planning for the Future and Preserving our Heritage

The Council's Planning and Consultation Committee continues to put forward views on behalf of the community about every application for planning permission in the town. A lot of effort goes into preparing comments that relate to national planning policy, and it is frustrating when we feel that these views have not been given sufficient weight by Dorset Council as the planning authority.

Nevertheless, Town Councillors are determined to make sure that the views of local residents are taken into consideration when decisions are made.

Considerable work is being done by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to produce a policy document that will provide a framework for future sustainable development that is acceptable to local residents and can help to protect the character of Swanage for the future. There will be a first round of public consultation early in the New Year.

